DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 295 257 CS 506 202

AUTHOR Buddenbaum, Judith M.
TITLE Religion in Network Television Newscasts: 1976-1986.
PUB DATE Jul 88
NOTE 33p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (71st, Portland, OR, July 2-5, 1988). Research supported by the Equal Opportunities Council, Colorado State University.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Broadcast Television; Newspapers; *News Reporting; *Religion
IDENTIFIERS Media Coverage; News Topics; *Religious News; Television Networks; *Television News

ABSTRACT

A study analyzed the religion news coverage by network television over a 10-year period, examining newscasts by ABC, CBS, and NBC during a constructed month for 1976, 1981, and 1986. Two hundred forty news stories with clear mentions of religious topics were selected from "TV News Index and Abstracts" and analyzed using a content analysis scheme. Each story was coded according to network, month, date, year, and day of week, and classified by focus and significance of information, topic, news angle, and type of information about religion. The total number of stories, the length of the available news space, and the total length of each religion news story were also determined. Findings revealed that religion news is a rather stable commodity, and the networks generally included at least one religion story in half to two-thirds of all newscasts. Yet, true religion news--news focusing on religious beliefs and behavior and telling something meaningful about them--was aired much less frequently. Fewer than one-fifth of all stories focused on religion; the rest generally mentioned religion as a minor element in an essentially secular context. In addition, some religions were covered much more heavily than others. For example, networks sometimes devoted as much as two-fifths of their coverage to Catholics and Catholicism. Also, the networks provided more information about conflict and discrete events than about religion itself. Finally, there was little evidence of improved or changed coverage of religion in television news over time. (Ten references and eight tables of data are included.) (ARH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED295257

Religion in Network Television Newscasts: 1976-1986

Judith M. Buddenbaum, Associate Professor
Department of Technical Journalism
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado 80523

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Judith M. Buddenbaum
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Paper presented to the Mass Communication and Society Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication at the national convention, Portland, Oregon, July 1988.

The author thanks the Equal Opportunities Council of Colorado State University for providing funds for this research.

CS506202

Religion in Network Television Newscasts: 1976-1986

Events during the past decade have focused increasing attention on religion news, but that attention has also spawned a chorus of complaints about the quality of religion reporting. While some critics complain primarily about the amount, variety and thoroughness of the coverage,[1] others detect bias. In one recent study, only 19 percent of Catholic priests surveyed said the press is "fair, honest or objective" in handling religion news. As one priest put it, the press is:

> interested only in the sensational, the shocking, the scandalous and not particularly in the more staid and less dramatic. This assessment is far more true in respect to television people.[2]

Although the critics provide little evidence to support their contentions, there is certainly reason for concern about the quality of religion news people may be getting through the mass media. At newspapers, religion has traditionally been considered a second-class beat to be shunned by talented reporters.[3] Indeed, one recent study found that editors and reporters ranked religion news 18th in importance out of 18 content areas.[4]

Other studies suggest that the religion beat is losing its second-class status as more and more newspapers add specialists to their reporting staff or devote additional resources to the beat.[5] However, the studies of religion news also reveal inaccuracies and occasional outright bias in the coverage. They also offer insight as to why the audience may perceive bias where none was intended.

In general, religion news emphasizes people and events, but rarely includes sufficient attention to doctrine to explain reported behavior or make the people and events understandable. However, the coverage is not all fluff. Many newspapers today emphasize issues and conflict involving religion instead of consensus and cooperation. At the same time, they rely upon only a relatively few, highly visible news sources. Thus, they devote the most attention to religions that are heavily represented among members of their audience and to those that are "making news" of a kind that might affect the general public. As a result, most religion news in large newspapers is about Catholics and Southern Baptists (and the Moral Majority) and to other religious traditions that are particularly strong in the newspaper's circulation area. Sects and cults may also be over-represented on the news pages of some newspapers, but most individual mainline, fundamentalist and holiness churches and all black churches are almost invisible.[6]

As limited as the studies of religion news by the print media are, they are voluminous in comparison to studies that even mention television news coverage of religion. Most content analyses of network news ignore religion news as a category; others use the "religion" category only when no other possibility for coding a story exists. Although studies generally report that fewer than 2 percent of television news stories are about religion,[7] that probably underestimates the total volume of stories that actually mention religion. In a study of television news coverage of international affairs, for example, Larson does not use religion as a category, but his work indicates that approximately 1 percent of

the stories between 1972 and 1981 covered the Vatican, while about one-third came from other trouble spots associated with religion such as Northern Ireland, Iran and the Middle East.[8]

Although Larson's work suggests there may be more network news stories mentioning religion than critics imagine, the only quantitative analysis of religion news coverage provides no data on the total coverage. In that study by TV Guide, the magazine reports only that religion news is "both neglected and distorted" with an overemphasis on the power and influence of Christian fundamentalists and on the color and excitement surrounding papal tours.[9]

Taken together the studies of religion news in daily newspapers suggest that there are still problems with the coverage, but it is improving and increasing and may be better than the critics imagine. However, no similar conclusion is possible for the coverage by network television. The television studies are so limited that it is hard to tell how much attention network television pays to religion news or what the religion coverage is really like. Furthermore, the studies of religion news coverage by the print media may not apply to television because of obvious differences between print and broadcast journalism.

Therefore, this study analyzed the religion news coverage by network television for the 10-year period from 1976 through 1986 to test four hypotheses suggested by the existing studies of religion news coverage:

1. True religion news -- news focusing on religious beliefs and behavior and telling something meaningful about them -- will be rather rare, but stories simply mentioning religion will be much more common.

2. The news will be unevenly distributed among religions with Catholics and evangelical Protestants associated with the religious right getting more attention than other religious groups.

3. There will be more emphasis on the sensational -- violence and conflict -- and on events and people than on the doctrine that could explain the conflict and events.

4. There will be some evidence of improvement in religion news over time. This change might take the form of more stories and/or more time devoted to religion news stories, more variety in the topics covered, or more significant information about religion in the stories.

Methodology

Definitions: This study uses a generous definition of religion news in order to obtain a large enough sample for meaningful analysis. A story that mentions a religion, religious institution, religious person or uses religious language (e.g. "holy") or shows a religious person, institution or symbol (e.g. a cross) in a way that would lead average viewers to believe they might be learning something about religion is considered religion news.

A story is a presentation unit identified by a beginning time and heading in TV News Index and Abstracts. Each story may have one or more segments identifiable by paragraphing in the Abstracts and by the use of a different reporter or location within the story. All segments need not mention or show religion for the story to qualify as religion news.

The Sample: This study is based on newscasts by ABC, CBS and NBC during a constructed month for 1976, 1981 and 1986.

Potential religion news stories were initially identified from the abstracts in TV News Index and Abstracts. If the abstract met the definition for religion news or described subject matter

commonly associated with religion (e.g. fighting in Northern Ireland, abortion), a videotape of the story was ordered from the Vanderbilt TV News Archives. In addition, if the abstract for a story covered by any network initially qualified as religion news, videotapes for comparable stories on the other network(s) were also ordered.

The videotapes were then examined and stories that did not meet the definition of religion news were excluded from the final sample. Under this procedure many issue-oriented stories were excluded because there was no explicit mention or depiction of religion. In addition, stories mentioning a quasi-religious institution in a way that would not lead the average viewer to expect information about religion (e.g. Brigham Young University's football record), those mentioning clergy members such as Jesse Jackson that did not use a religious title and that showed or quoted the person in a secular context were also excluded. Although the use of a religious title such as "reverend" was sufficient to qualify a story as religion news, stories with simple mentions of Ayatollah Khomeini were excluded because a test on a convenience sample of college students sugested that many people do not recognize "ayatollah" as a religious title.

Content Analysis: The final sample of 240 religion news stories was analyzed using a content analysis scheme developed for studies of religion news coverage by daily newspapers.[10]

The scheme calls for coding each story according to network, month, date, year, and day of week, and classifying it by the

focus and significance of the information, by topic, news angle, and type of information about religion.

A story is said to focus on religion if the story or segment lead calls attention to the religious dimension of the story. Stories that simply mention religion or make use of a religious source or setting within the body of the story do not focus on religion. However, regardless of the focus, information may be significant if it directly relates to religious beliefs or practices or to religiously inspired behaviors or attempts to provide explanations for the mentions or depictions of religion in the story.

The topics used in the study are religion itself and religion related to: military/guerilla/terrorism, politics/government, law/crime/courts, business/labor/economics, social services, science/medicine, education, media, culture/entertainment, lifestyle/behavior, and important people other than religious figures. News angles include novelty, change, violence, conflict, consensus/conflict resolution, human interest, and routine coverage of stories whose news values would most likely be importance and/or timeliness. However, these values were not coded because importance and timeliness are assumed to apply to all stories. The type of information about religion includes: beliefs and practices, events, projects (social ministry, missionary activities, etc.) issues and conflict, the sociology of religion (trends and demographics), and features (worship services, holiday observances, personality profiles and historical information).

In addition, the scheme uses open-ended lists to code stories according to the religions mentioned, the geographic location of the news event or situation, and the specific subject for the story.

The abstracts were used to determine the total number of stories, the length of the available news hole, and the total length of each religion news story. The actual length of the religion coverage within each story was determined by using a stopwatch to time the information to the nearest 5 seconds. Simple mentions of religion within a story were coded as 5 seconds each -- about the length of time it takes to see or hear the reference and decide no further information about religion is forthcoming.

Reliability: When all the stories had been coded, a sub-sample of 10 percent of all stories, but at least two from each network for each year, were recoded by the author and by an outside coder trained to use the content analysis scheme. Simple agreement and Scott's pi were calculated for fixed-response variable for all stories and for all stories from each network and from each year. Both simple agreement and Scott's pi indicate intra-coder and inter-coder reliability of at least .7 on all variables included in this study.

Findings

Although the networks moved toward fewer but longer stories between 1976 and 1986 and the daily news hole decreased by at least one minute over the same period on all networks except ABC, the amount of religion news and the time devoted to religion stories remained relatively constant. Differences among the networks and

over time are generally small and inconsistent. Stories with a holiday theme account for many of the differences over time. The networks carried newscasts on Christmas Day in 1981 and 1986, but not in 1976. In addition, Good Friday coincided with a sample day in 1981.

Except in 1976, NBC provided a slightly higher proportion of stories (about 10 percent) and devoted slightly more of the news hole to them (12 to 15 percent) than did the other networks, but only CBS in 1976 devoted more than 6 percent of the news hole to actual mentions or discussion of religion. (Table 1) Fewer than one-third of the stories mentioning religion were 30 seconds or less, but at least twice that number of stories contained 30 seconds or less of information about religion. (Table 2)

In addition to providing very little time for actual news about religion, the networks also devoted very little attention to most religions. In all years, Catholicism was mentioned in at least one-fifth of the stories on all networks. While Muslims were sometimes mentioned in a similar proportion of stories, occasional heavy attention to evangelical and mainline Protestants is misleading because stories about these groups are divided among several denominations. (Table 3)

Evangelical coverage was approximately equally divided between Baptist clergy from New Christian Right organizations such as the Moral Majority, and individual black Baptist congregations and clergy aligned with the civil rights movement, but not with the New Christian Right. News of mainline Protestants was also divided among various groups with Anglicans, Presbyterians, Lutherans and

Methodists getting the most coverage. However, attention to them was diluted by the fact that stories mentioning mainline Protestants came from various geographic regions whereas almost all of the stories classified as evangelical coverage came from within the United States.

Except for NBC in 1976 and ABC in 1986, about half of the news concerned traditional religious trouble spots around the world. (Table 4) Stories from these regions generally explain the pattern of mentions for individual religious traditions. In 1976 about one-fourth of the stories were from Lebanon; most were told in terms of fighting between Muslims and unspecified Christians. As a result, more stories mentioned those groups in 1976 than in any other year. In 1976 and again in 1981 significant attention went to fighting in Northern Ireland between Catholics and Protestants but the 1981 sample also included many stories about the Catholic Church's involvement in Polish politics. Thus, Catholic coverage was particularly high in 1981. In 1986 the Middle East was back in the news because Americans Father Lawrence Jenco and the Rev. Benjamin Weir were held hostage in Lebanon and then released, but the Philippines and South Africa also moved to center stage. Therefore, Catholic coverage remained high. However, news of mainline Protestants increased significantly because of references to Anglican envoy Terry Waite and to the Rev. Benjamin Weir, a Presbyterian, in news of the hostage crisis and because of heavy reliance on Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu as an anti-apartheid source in news from South Africa.

This heavy emphasis on religion news from traditional foreign trouble spots also partially explains the topics covered most heavily in the news. Only one story during 1976 and fewer than one-fifth of the stories on each of the networks during 1981 and 1986 dealt with purely religious matters. These stories, like the ones about government and law, were about equally divided between foreign and U.S. news. Foreign news accounts for the high proportion of stories in the military/guerilla/terrorism category. (Table 5)

However, the nature of the foreign news does not really explain other aspects of the religion news coverage. Although relatively few stories in 1976 and 1986 focused on religion, those that did were divided rather evenly between foreign and domestic coverage. Significant information about religion was also relatively rare, generally occurring in fewer than two-fifths of the stories on each network during each of the three years. (Table 6)

Although those stories that focused on religion were somewhat more likely than the other stories to provide at least some significant information about religion, again the significance was not directly related to the geographic focus of the news. In 1976, for example, about half of the stories from Lebanon focused on religion, but none provided significant information. However, several stories that brought up the religion connection later in the story provided at least a sentence of explanation for the religious involvement. Similarly, stories about religion during the 1976 election campaign in the United States were about equally divided between those that mentioned religion in the lead and those that simply brought it up within the body of the story. However,

significant information about religion occurred both in stories emphasizing religion and in those focusing on politics.

Consistent with the topic and focus of the stories, conflict and violence were the two most common news values. (Table 7) Non-violent conflict was common in both foreign and U.S. news. However, violent conflict and consensus/conflict resolution showed up primarily in stories from the Middle East and North n Ireland. Human interest as a news value was more common in 1981 and 1986 than in 1976 because of heavy coverage of Pope John Paul II's travels and because of stories with a holiday theme during those years.

Most information in the stories was about one-time events or issues that only tangentially involved religion. Very few stories actually told anything significant about religion. In fact, fewer than one-fourth of the stories on any network in any year provided information about religious beliefs and practices, about social ministry or missionary projects, or about demographics or trends. (Table 8) Information about beliefs/practices and projects usually occurred in holiday stories while information on demographics and trends showed up only in stories about U.S. politics.

Conclusion

This study indicates that religion news is a rather stable commodity. The networks generally included at least one religion story in half to two-thirds of all newscasts and at least mentioned religion in 6 to 11 percent of their stories.

While that is probably as much religion news as one can reasonably expect, the data also confirm hypothesis 1. More stories

mention religion than actually cover it in any detail. Most stories devoted less than 30 seconds to actual mentions or discussions of religion. The time actually spent on those mentions or discussions of religion accounted for only 2 to 7 percent of the newscast. Furthermore, fewer than one-fifth of all stories focused on religion itself. The rest generally mentioned religion as a minor element in an essentially secular context.

The data also partially confirm hypothesis 2. Some religions were covered much more heavily than others. In fact, most Protestant denominations were almost invisible; others showed up only as passing mentions in a handful of stories. However, the networks devoted at least one-fifth, and sometimes as much as two-fifths, of their coverage to Catholics and Catholicism. Many of those stories were necessary because of the networks' emphasis on foreign news, but some such as holiday coverage from the Vatican and from Catholic churches within the United States seemed designed primarily to take advantage of the dramaturgical elements of Catholic worship.

While this does suggest some overemphasis on Catholicism, evangelical Christians associated with the New Religious Right did not receive undue attention. People and organizations associated with the evangelical tradition were never mentioned in even one-fifth of the stories on any network in any given year. Only about half of that went to the religious right. Therefore, hypothesis 2 could be only partially supported.

In addition to providing limited attention to most religions, the networks also generally confined their coverage to only a few subjects. Consistent with hypothesis 3, the networks provided

more information about conflict and discrete events than about religion itself. And even that conflict-and event-oriented coverage was rather limited. Fully three-fourths of the stories were about violent military conflict between religious factions abroad or about political conflict between religion and secular authority in Poland and in the United States. Only a few stories explored primarily religious disputes within or among churches. Fewer than one-fourth provided significant information about religious beliefs and practices or about demographics and trends.

The results of this study generally support hypotheses 1 through 3; they do not suggest that there has been change and improvement in television coverage of religion news similar to that which seems to have occurred at newspapers. Contrary to hypothesis 4, there was little evidence of increased or improved coverage over time. No consistent pattern emerged over time in the number of stories or amount of time devoted to religion news. Although the networks broadcast more stories focusing on religion in 1981 and 1986 than they did in 1976, the religion coverage in 1981 was generally more substantive than in either 1976 or 1986. There was also greater variety in the geographic regions, religions and topics covered in 1981.

Although the data suggest there may have been some improvement in coverage between 1976 and 1981, that trend does not appear to have continued into 1986. While the networks seem to include enough stories mentioning religion and devote sufficient time to those stories, the findings generally support other criticisms of religion news coverage. The networks consistently fall short of

their potential for providing a marketplace of ideas. Not only do too few religious traditions receive adequate amounts of coverage, but the subjects of the stories and the information in them are very limited.

If stories emphasizing conflict and violence can be equated with sensational coverage, then the critics may be right to complain about the image of religion presented in the news. Certainly the networks devote relatively little attention to purely religious matters. Except for the holiday coverage, there are few stories that explain beliefs and practices, show people worshipping or describe social ministry or missionary projects undertaken by religious organizations. Thus the religion coverage may not truly inform people about the power and significance of religion in the world and it almost certainly does not represent religion as it is experienced by many viewers.

To improve the coverage, the networks probably would not have to devote substantially more time to religion news. However, they might have to sacrifice some of the coverage they lavish on the Catholic Church abroad in holiday and feature coverage in order to devote more attention to the diverse religious traditions within the United States. In addition, they would probably have to devote more off-camera reporting time to come up with substantive information about beliefs, practices, patterns and trends that could made the traditional conflict- and event- oriented coverage more understandable and meaningful.

References

1. John M. Kreps, "Press Coverage of Religion: Better, but Not Good Enough," The Christian Century, pp. 978-979, Nov. 5, 1986; "The Religion Beat: The Reporting of Religion in America," report of a Rockefeller Foundation Conference, August 1981.

2. William Fodiak, "How the Catholic clergy in Pennsylvania views the media," Editor and Publisher, pp. 40,25, December 27, 1986. See also, Cal Thomas, "Not ready for prime-time prayers," The Quill, 74(9):15-19 (1986).

3. Terry Mattingly, "Religion News: No Room at the Inn?" The Quill, 71(1)12-19 (1983).

4. Charles K. Atkin, Judee K. Burgoon and Michael Burgoon, "How Journalists Perceive the Reading Audience," Newspaper Research Journal, 4(2):51-63 (1983).

5. Ernest C. Hynds, "Large Daily Newspapers Have Improved Coverage of Religion," Journalism Quarterly, 64(2-3):444-448 (1987). David Shaw, "Coverage Increases: Media View Religion in a News Light," Los Angeles Times, reprint from December 28, 1983.

6. Hynds, op.cit.; Judith M. Buddenbaum, "Analysis of Religion News Coverage in Three Major Newspapers," Journalism Quarterly, 63(3):600-606. 1986; Roderick P. Hart, Kathleen J. Turner and Ralph Knupp, "A Rhetorical Profile of Religious News: Time, 1947-1976," Journal of Communication, 31(3):58-68. 1981; Judith M. Buddenbaum, "Source Dependence and Story Production: A Comparison of Religion News Coverage by Specialists and Non-specialists at Three Newspapers," paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication national convention, Memphis, Tenn., 1985; John P. Ferre, "Denominational Biases in the American Press," Review of Religious Research, 21(3):276-283 (1980).

7. See, for example: David B. Liroff, "A Comparative Content Analysis of Network Television Evening News Programs and Other National News Media in the United States," Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1970, p. 170.

8. James F. Larson, Television's Window on the World: International Affairs Coverage on the U.S. Networks (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1984) pp. 55-56.

9. Joanmarie Kalter, "The Greatest Stories Never Told...Right," reprint from TV Guide, November 16, 1985.

10. Judith M. Buddenbaum, "Religion in the News: Factors Asscociated with the Selection of Stories from an International Religion News Service by Daily Newspapers," Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1984, pp. 41-60, 299-327; Buddenbaum, "Analysis," op.cit.

Table 1: Allocation of News Hole to Religion News by Year and Network

Allocation	1976			1981			1986		
	ABC	CBS	NBC	ABC	CBS	NBC	ABC	CBS	NBC
Total Number of Days in Sample	19	18	15	27	28	30	29	29	30
Percent Days with Religion News	52.6%	72.2%	73.3%	55.6%	57.1%	76.7%	48.3%	75.0%	73.3%
Total Number of Stories on Days in Sample	293	279	208	398	415	399	313	375	371
Percent Stories Mentioning Religion	6.1%	8.2%	7.2%	6.3%	6.5%	10.5%	7.3%	7.7%	10.0%
Average News Hole per Day in Sample in Minutes, Seconds	22:10	22:50	22:30	22:20	23:00	21:40	22:00	21:40	21:20
Percent Total Time Devoted to Religion News Stories	8.6%	14.0%	12.3%	7.1%	9.2%	11.6%	11.7%	10.8%	14.7%
Percent Time Actually Devoted to Mention/Discussion of Religion	1.8%	6.7%	2.4%	5.0%	3.4%	5.8%	2.9%	4.0%	5.1%

Table 2: Length of Religion News Stories by Year and Network

Length	1976 ABC (n=18)	1976 CBS (n=23)	1976 NBC (n=15)	1981 ABC (n=25)	1981 CBS (n=27)	1981 NBC (n=42)	1986 ABC (n=23)	1986 CBS (n=29)	1986 NBC (n=38)
Total Length of Story:[a]									
≤ 30 Seconds	33.3%	21.7%	20.0%	36.0%	18.5%	26.2%	13.0%	27.6%	23.7%
40 to 90 Seconds	5.6%	4.3%	-----	16.0%	22.2%	14.3%	-----	3.4%	5.3%
100 to 180 Seconds	27.8%	39.1%	60.0%	32.0%	40.7%	42.9%	30.4%	48.3%	36.8%
≥ 190 Seconds	33.3%	34.8%	20.0%	16.0%	18.5%	16.7%	56.5%	20.7%	34.2%
Actual Length of Religion News:[b]									
≤ 30 Seconds	72.2%	52.2%	66.7%	56.0%	40.7%	42.9%	60.9%	69.0%	63.2%
40 to 90 Seconds	22.2%	17.4%	26.7%	16.0%	37.0%	33.3%	13.0%	3.4%	13.2%
100 to 180 Seconds	5.6%	17.4%	6.7%	20.0%	14.8%	23.8%	17.4%	24.1%	18.4%
≥ 190 Seconds	-----	13.0%	-----	8.0%	7.4%	-----	8.7%	3.4%	5.3%

[a] Differences among networks: 1976, 1981, 1986 p = n.s.
Differences within networks: ABC, CBS p = n.s.; NBC $p \leq .05$

[b] Differences among networks: 1976, 1981, 1986 p = n.s.
Differences within networks: ABC, CBS $p \leq .1$; NBC p = n.s.

NOTE: Totals do not equal 100 percent because of rounding.

Table 3: Religions Mentioned in Religion News Stories by Year and Network

Religion	1976 ABC (n=18)	1976 CBS (n=23)	1976 NBC (n=15)	1981 ABC (n=25)	1981 CBS (n=27)	1981 NBC (n=42)	1986 ABC (n=23)	1986 CBS (n=29)	1986 NBC (n=38)
Christian									
Christian (unspecified type)	44.5%	21.7%	40.0%	8.0%	18.5%	16.7%	17.4%	10.3%	10.5%
Protestant (unpsecified type)	11.1%	4.3%	-----	4.0%	3.7%	9.5%	8.7%	17.4%	18.4%
Mainline Protestant	-----	4.3%	-----	8.0%	7.4%	4.8%	30.4%	17.4%	21.1%
Evangelical Protestant	16.7%	17.4%	6.7%	16.0%	11.1%	9.5%	8.7%	6.9%	10.5%
Holiness Protestant	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	2.4%	-----	-----	-----
Latter Day Saint	5.6%	4.3%	6.7%	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Roman Catholic	22.3%	21.7%	20.0%	40.0%	44.4%	47.7%	30.4%	41.3%	39.5%
Orthodox Catholic	-----	-----	-----	-----	3.7%	2.4%	-----	-----	-----
Non-Christian									
Jewish	5.6%	26.1%	20.0%	12.0%	14.8%	4.8%	8.7%	10.3%	15.8%
Moslem	11.1%	17.4%	33.4%	12.0%	3.7%	7.2%	-----	3.4%	5.2%
Hindu	-----	-----	-----	4.0%	-----	-----	-----	10.3%	2.6%
Native American	-----	-----	-----	4.0%	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Cults	-----	-----	-----	12.0%	11.1%	4.8%	13.0%	13.8%	-----

Totals do not equal 100 percent because more than one religion could be mentioned in and coded for each story.

Table 4: Geographic Location of Religion News by Year and Network

Location	1976			1981			1986		
	ABC (n=18)	CBS (n=23)	NBC (n=15)	ABC (n=25)	CBS (n=27)	NBC (n=42)	ABC (n=23)	CBS (n=29)	NBC (n=38)
United States	50.0%	47.8%	60.0%	48.0%	37.0%	47.6%	52.2%	27.6%	36.8%
Foreign Country									
Europe									
Northern Ireland	11.1%	4.3%	6.7%	4.0%	3.7%	7.2%	-----	3.4%	2.6%
USSR	5.6%	4.3%	-----	4.0%	-----	2.4%	4.3%	3.4%	-----
Vatican City	-----	4.3%	6.7%	16.0%	11.1%	16.7%	8.7%	-----	-----
Other[a]	-----	4.3%	-----	8.0%	14.8%	7.2%	4.3%	13.8%	15.7%
Middle East									
Lebanon	33.3%	26.1%	26.7%	4.0%	7.4%	-----	-----	-----	2.6%
Other[a]	-----	4.3%	-----	12.0%	11.1%	7.2%	4.3%	-----	-----
Africa[a]	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	13.0%	13.8%	18.4%
Asia/Pacific Islands[a]	-----	4.3%	-----	4.0%	7.4%	2.4%	8.7%	13.8%	7.9%
Australia	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	3.4%	2.6%
Latin America/South America[a]	-----	-----	-----	-----	3.7%	7.1%	-----	10.3%	5.3%
None[b]	-----	-----	-----	-----	3.7%	2.4%	4.3%	10.3%	5.3%

[a] Countries not reported by at least two networks in each of two years.

[b] Stories in this category are general commentaries about religion.

Differences among networks: 1976, 1981, 1986 p = n.s.

Differences within networks: ABC, CBS, NBC $p \leq .05$

NOTE: Totals do not equal 100 percent because of rounding.

Table 5: Topic of Religion News Stories by Year and Network

Topic	1976 ABC (n=18)	1976 CBS (n=23)	1976 NBC (n=15)	1981 ABC (n=25)	1981 CBS (n=27)	1981 NBC (n=42)	1986 ABC (n=23)	1986 CBS (n=29)	1986 NBC (n=28)
Religion Only	-----	-----	6.7%	20.0%	14.8%	7.1%	8.7%	13.8%	15.8%
Religion and:									
Military/Guerilla/Terrorism	38.9%	26.1%	26.7%	8.0%	7.4%	11.9%	-----	6.9%	13.2%
Politics/Government	27.8%	56.5%	46.7%	28.0%	40.7%	40.5%	47.8%	37.9%	34.2%
Law/Crime/Courts	16.7%	8.7%	6.7%	20.0%	14.8%	14.3%	13.0%	17.2%	13.2%
Business/Labor/Economics	-----	-----	6.7%	4.0%	-----	7.2%	4.3%	3.4%	7.9%
Social Services	5.6%	-----	6.7%	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Science/Medicine	-----	4.3%	-----	-----	-----	4.8%	-----	-----	-----
Education	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	2.4%	-----	-----	-----
Media	5.6%	4.3%	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Culture/Entertainment	-----	-----	-----	8.0%	3.7%	4.8%	-----	-----	-----
Lifestyle/Behavior	-----	-----	-----	-----	3.7%	2.4%	-----	6.9%	-----
Important People	5.6%	-----	-----	12.0%	11.1%	4.8%	26.1%	13.8%	15.8%

Differences among networks: 1976, 1981, 1986 p = n.s.

Differences within networks: ABC $p \leq .01$; CBS, NBC p = n.s.

NOTE: Totals do not equal 100 percent because of rounding.

Table 6: Focus of Stories and Significance of Information in Religion News by Year and Network

Focus/Significance	1976 ABC (n=18)	1976 CBS (n=23)	1976 NBC (n=15)	1981 ABC (n=25)	1981 CBS (n=27)	1981 NBC (n=42)	1986 ABC (n=23)	1986 CBS (n=29)	1986 NBC (n=38)
Focus on Religion									
Significant Information	11.1%	17.4%	6.7%	36.0%	22.2%	16.7%	21.7%	27.6%	18.4%
No Significant Information	5.6%	4.3%	-----	24.0%	18.5%	14.3%	4.3%	6.9%	5.3%
Focus not on Religion									
Significant Information	11.1%	30.4%	20.0%	8.0%	11.1%	23.8%	21.7%	13.8%	10.5%
No Significant Information	72.2%	47.8%	73.3%	32.0%	48.1%	45.2%	52.2%	51.7%	65.8%

Differences among networks: 1976, 1981, 1986 p = n.s.

Differences within networks: ABC $p \leq .05$; CBS, NBC p = n.s.

NOTE: Totals do not equal 100 percent because of rounding.

Table 7: Main News Value in Religion News Stories by Year and Network

News Value	1976			1981			1986		
	ABC (n=18)	CBS (n=23)	NBC (n=15)	ABC (n=25)	CBS (n=27)	NBC (n=42)	ABC (n=23)	CBS (n=29)	NBC (n=38)
Novelty	11.1%	4.3%	6.7%	8.0%	-----	2.4%	-----	-----	5.3%
Change	5.6%	4.3%	6.7%	-----	-----	2.4%	-----	3.4%	5.3%
Conflict	38.9%	34.8%	46.7%	44.0%	40.7%	54.7%	60.9%	55.2%	47.3%
Consensus/Conflict Resolution	5.6%	13.0%	20.0%	4.0%	3.7%	9.5%	-----	-----	5.3%
Violence	22.2%	26.1%	6.7%	8.0%	18.5%	14.3%	4.3%	6.9%	10.5%
Human Interest	16.7%	8.7%	6.7%	20.0%	14.8%	16.7%	30.4%	34.5%	23.7%
Other[a]	-----	8.7%	6.7%	16.0%	22.2%	-----	4.3%	-----	2.6%

[a] This category includes routine stories for which the probable news values are impact and/or timeliness. These news values were not included in the coding scheme because of the difficulty in making the appropriate subjective judgment; impact and/or timeliness are assumed to apply to all stories.

Differences among networks: 1976, 1981, 1986 p = n.s.

Differences within networks: ABC p = n.s.; CBS $p \leq .01$; NBC p = n.s.

NOTE: Totals do not equal 100 percent because of rounding.

Table 8: Type of Information in Religion News Stories by Year and Network

Information	1976 ABC (n=18)	1976 CBS (n=23)	1976 NBC (n=15)	1981 ABC (n=25)	1981 CBS (n=27)	1981 NBC (n=42)	1986 ABC (n=23)	1986 CBS (n=29)	1986 NBC (n=38)
Beliefs and Practices	-----	13.0%	6.7%	12.0%	-----	-----	8.7%	-----	7.9%
Events	66.7%	47.9%	40.0%	32.0%	25.9%	23.8%	4.3%	3.4%	13.2%
Projects[a]	5.6%	-----	6.7%	-----	3.7%	2.4%	-----	-----	-----
Issues	27.8%	21.7%	40.0%	28.0%	44.4%	59.5%	56.5%	62.1%	52.6%
Features[b]	-----	4.3%	6.7%	16.0%	18.5%	11.9%	26.0%	31.0%	26.3%
Trends and Demographics	-----	13.0%	-----	12.0%	7.4%	2.4%	4.3%	3.4%	-----

[a] This category includes stories about missionary activity, social ministry projects and social services offered by religious organizations on a continuing basis.

[b] This category includes personality profiles and seasonal features.

Differences among networks: 1976, 1981, 1986 p = n.s.

Differences within networks: ABC, CBS, NBC $p \leq .05$

NOTE: Totals do not equal 100 percent because of rounding.